Integration of fisheries and environmental issues, ministerial meeting, March 1997, Bergen

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PURPOSE: to present a report on the implementation of the "Statement of Conclusions from the Intermediate Ministerial Meetings on the Integration of Fisheries and Environmental Issues 13th-14th March 1997 in Bergen". CONTENT: the report deals with the section of the Bergen Statement of Conclusions called "Actions". It is concerned with actions taken at Community level and does not contain information on action taken by individual Member States. More paricularly, it examines Community initiatives taken in response to the Bergen Meetings in the following areas: - rebuilding or maintenance of spawning stock biomass: in the framework of the yearly bilateral agreement between the EC and Norway, target fishing mortality rates and minimum spawning stock biomass levels have been fixed for herring, mackerel and plaice. In 1998, TACs were also established for the first time for many other species of fish, while Council Regulation 847/96/EC, which became fully applicable on the 1st January 1998, introduces additional conditions for year-to-year management of TACs and quotas; - reduction of fishing fleet capacity and/or deployed fishing effort: the main measures taken relate to the multi-annual guidance programmes (MAGPs) which aim to reduce fleet capacity between 1/1/1997 and 31/12/2001 to a level that will ensure the long-term balance between fishing effort and resources (-30% on stocks in risk of depletion and -20% on overfished stocks); - protection of juvenile fish, crustaceans and molluscs via measures relating to mesh sizes for the Channel, catch percentages to be retained on board and increased selectivity of gears; - protection of species and habitats via measures relating to MAGPs and the yearly TACs/quotas- regulation which will have a beneficial effect on the North Sea ecosystems. The Natura 2000 network will also allow Member States to propose protected sites; - protection of aquatic species from activities other than fisheries, notably by making provision for measures to combat sea pollution from industrial installations and taking steps to combat Eutrophication caused by nitrates from agricultural sources. - controlling fishing and enforcing legislation by means of international cooperation, satellite-monitoring and efficient landing controls; - make provision for experimental scientific, technological and economic impact studies, with a view to achieving sustainable fishing; - keeping regionally involved Member States, the industry, scientists and economists involved and informed by means of a regularly conducted regional consultation process; - achieving further integration of fisheries and environmental policies by means of employing a recognised scientific body to establish a work program for research activities on the biological impact of fisheries and evaluating the output of meetings organised by, inter alia, ICES, NAFO and NASCO on the subject of the precautionary approach.